

***TL;DR:*** *The board has decided to dismiss the results of the election and has decided against voting me on and has attempted to have me removed from my volunteer positions with the company. Their actions now go so far as to potentially endanger my professional career and my life outside of MAGFest, so I will be stepping down from my position following our virtual event. If you would like to hear my side of what's going on, contact me at: [jatillet95@gmail.com](mailto:jatillet95@gmail.com), discord at outlaw#4188, or by calling me at (443) 409-5318.*

Hello,

My name is Josiah Tillett, and I am one of your STOPS heads, Staff Services Division Heads, and occasional A/V guy. I am one of the victors of the 2020 BoD election. I am unable to fulfill the promises I campaigned on, and for that I am sorry. I'm sorry because due to circumstances out of my control, I didn't even have a chance. The abuse and mistreatment I've been subject to has worn me down and has left me feeling isolated and in fear for my ability to be a member of this community.

As one of your heads of Staff and a selected nominee of the electorate, I would like to report on my experiences of the past few months. Since the election's conclusion, Shir and I have been subjected to months of meetings, shifting timelines, and an incredibly aggressive vetting process that at times crossed the line into inappropriate. In these meetings, I have had to defend my actions, my character, and intentions; all things I had felt I had already proven true to the MAGFest staff when they voted for me to fill the 2-year seat. Taking care to never make an outright accusation, the board insinuated that I was transphobic, a misogynist, and that my sole intention was to directly undermine the Board's status with the rest of the community. I was made to answer for times I have been critical of the board and instructed to never disagree with them publicly.

My experience during this time proved to me that the board is exclusionary, and acts to remain exclusive. The onboarding process that the board asked Shir and I to go through was not communicated effectively or in a timely manner. Despite repeated claims that prior board members went through the same process, the timeline we were provided was months longer than other additions to the board were subject to.

The longer this process went on, the clearer it became that it served only one purpose: To break the staff-elected nominees down to such a degree that we either quit outright or became compliant with the board wishes. We were frequently solicited for feedback and opinions, but those opinions were met with acknowledgement and dismissal at best, and aggression and

accusations at worst. In certain cases, questioning individual members of the board about what they said was treated as being disrespectful and brought up as evidence that their insinuations were true. To complicate matters further, individual members of the board acted on their instincts of paranoia, and refused to address any of these matters in a public or verifiable (i.e. written) format. These accusations occurred over the phone, either in a group call or in one-on-ones, which lead to further instances of hearsay and having my words misrepresented or otherwise used against me.

Beyond these instances of mistreatment, the lack of record of previous conversations made it difficult to nail down board members on their stances, because in one meeting they would be agreeable and the next they wouldn't. Missing members (those who weren't present) were frequently cited for their opinions, which were unverifiable because those opinions were solicited in one-on-one conversations. As a result, the board was allowed to determine who agreed and disagreed with them, but I was not. In one notable case (which Shir shared in their letter), we were accused of making up a policy of striving to keep conversations in public channels even after sharing screenshots from different members of the board advocating for that very position *years ago*. We entered this process worried, but in good faith, and were not treated to the same.

Exacerbating this process, one particular member of the Board had also been threatening and terrorizing me in order to directly prevent me from joining. This board member has attempted to coerce me into following their expected model of behavior, one of submissive support for the board, which I found to be contradictory to the collaborative spirit and mission of MAGFest. When this coercion failed, this board member has attempted to have me removed from the MAGFest community by levelling false accusations against me, alleging threats of bodily harm, and has ultimately (as of 11/18/2020) refused my requests to resolve their concerns via mediation.

To be 100% clear, I do not, and never had, held the intention of causing anyone in our community harm, physical or otherwise, regardless of how much we agreed or disagreed. While I use hyperbolic and spirited language when speaking my mind, it is consistent with the tone and demeanor of our community, and it would take an unreasonable leap to extrapolate such intentions from anything I've said. Simply search the word "kill" in slack, and you will find dozens of instances of friendly jokes and melodramatic statements from members of our community, none of which would you find unsettling in context. Taking any of those words out of context is an unreasonable and paranoid leap. I find it absurd that I *even have to say this*, it seems such a wild accusation to make. If you find that the tone of the MAGFest community is

problematic regardless of context, I find it underhanded that I would be singled out for it before any wider attempt to address our language as a community would be made.

Along with these accusations, this member of the board has attempted to bypass our internal processes of reporting and mediation and to have me banned without warning. Were it not for the intervention of others in the community, I would have been removed with no chance to defend myself, and the board's vague accusations would be the only record that stands. Thanks to those who have intervened, I have been allowed to remain until these allegations continue through the proper channels and I am exonerated. However, I will not be eligible to join the board, not this year and likely never so long as the current board remains.

Despite the year-long timeline given to me, I only found out about this as an issue on November 5th, 2020. As a result, I am treating this situation with the utmost care and respect. By their own request, I have not spoken to this member of the board since the rest of the board brought this issue to my attention, nor will I speak with them in the future without explicit permission. Through my discussion with the other members of the board, I have clarified my intent of goodwill, my shock at these allegations, and my request for mediation (which were initially accepted, but ultimately rejected), where I will do all I can to clarify those facts directly. However, by the time this situation was brought to me, it felt as if it were beyond repair. There was no attempt made to address this issue during the past year or the 5 months of hell my onboarding became. My assumption of friendship with the MAGFest board over the past year seems to have been one-sided. Based on how quickly it accelerated, I have to believe that this concern is being used to obfuscate the board's true fear, one which they have shared several times throughout my onboard process. That true fear is my relationship with the staff community, and the possibility that I may cause dissent and foment unrest amongst the ranks when I raise concern about board attempts to act in a way I find contrary to our core values.

For the past 7 years I have faithfully served at all levels of our org chart. I have sometimes fought and sometimes defended the board's misguided actions. I have dived into some very messy situations and stood for what is right. I have been open and honest with you, and have always acted with the interests of the community at heart. Because at times we've disagreed on what is right, they have come to see me as a threat to them, and I believe they never intended to allow me to join them but didn't know how to keep me off until now.

Believe me when I say, the MAGFest board of directors has not been acting with the interests of the community at heart. For years, but especially in the past 18 months, the board has been consolidating power and acting to subjugate the office with abusive practices. If you haven't heard of any of this before, it's okay. The office and a few well-known members of the MAGFest

community have been taking the brunt of this behavior due to the nature of our positions in relation to the board. For more context on those situations, I would encourage you to read the other letters. My hope in running for the board was to mediate and resolve some of these issues without causing conflict among the staff and our community. However, in attempting to besmirch my character and remove me forcibly from MAGFest, their behavior has crossed a line in the past few weeks, and I can no longer tolerate it.

They are my friends and colleagues, and that means that writing this letter feels as much as I am betraying them as I have felt they have betrayed me. Many of my years of service have been directly alongside these people as we've worked on our community and on our events. As individuals, many of whom I've known for years, the BoD are great people. However, something about that group, that exclusive club, drives them to make decisions that are detrimental to the health and future of the company. The MAGFest BoD may be wrong, but they aren't monsters.

It's why I can no longer continue volunteering for MAGFest so long as the current Board of Directors remains in charge. The board has chosen to escalate this situation in ways that are starting to impact my professional career and my personal life, and those are two things I'm not capable of putting on the line for MAGFest if they are just going to throw me away. My hope is to stay on through our virtual event, but circumstances may force my departure sooner than that. I would ask you to hold the board to account for their actions, but not at the risk of harassing any individual. This would give them more cause to continue in their persecution of me. They act together, and must be held accountable together.

My intention is not to confirm their fears about me and to start another riot or slack explosion, but to make sure you are aware of what's been going on in the background. If you have questions, please understand that I will be as open and honest as I can be, but might not be able to talk about the details of some of the things I've expressed in this letter. Years of experience have shown that they do not care if you quit or shout or raise hell. I just want to attend a fun convention with my friends, and I'm tired of fighting for it. We've tried for years to create real change with the board and have been ignored every time. It's been a wonderful 7 years building memories with you all. I'm so sorry to have to walk away after all this time.

Colossus roaring into the void,

*Josiah Tillet*

*Staff Services Div Head, Super MAGFest*

*STOPS Department Head, MAGWest*

*Main Stage Department Head, MAGStock*

*Staff Nominated Candidate for the Board of Directors, 2020*